

Grandma's Mail-Order Pantyhose

My grandfather was a loving man:
Worked in the refinery
Raised my father
And, I know,
Cared for his wife more than any man Ever cared
for a woman.
Love was working, raising, caring for.

When they were young, they were beautiful.
The old brown prints
Make their faces look like
Easy Arkansas days,
Sunny and stretching
Into warm evening picnics.

Of course,
I never knew them that way.

In middle age, Grandma began her Long, slow
walk toward death. Only a little personality
change
At first,
Then disorientation,
Complete loss of mental capacity, And the
end.
During these years, Grandpa
Retired from the refinery,
Quit fishing, and
Stayed home to do
What she could not, anymore.
One of his jobs
Was buying her pantyhose
STYLE: 717 SIZE: CD Quicksilver in a maroon-
and-white package
that read,
"Silk Reflections: Fits Like a Fantasy"
Somewhere along the line,
Grandpa tired of hunting pantyhose
In the women's section
And had them mail-ordered.

It was a stroke of genius.
They came on a regular basis
Like clockwork
Two pair at a time...

And then his job ended---
She died.
But my grandfather never stopped The order.
I'm not sure why But some
clerk at
Some storehouse in Little Rock Kept
packaging up and shipping
"Silk Reflections: Fits Like a Fantasy"
STYLE: 717 SIZE: CD Quicksilver
To Grandpa's house;
I know because,
Occasionally,
He would give a pair
To my mother or my wife.

Now here's the point:
My grandfather is a lot like me,
And I like to dream
About what he does with the rest.

On evenings,
When life is feeling very long,
He will pull out a package of
"Silk Reflections..."
Take out some rags or scraps, And stuff
them.
Then, he'll sit them down
In the old chair by the front window
Beside the glass cabinet
With all her collections in it, And he'll
talk...
Like they never could at the end.
He'll tell them how much he loved her
Even when she thought he was
Her brother, or "Papa", or a stranger,
How much he cared for her
Even when she brought the knife to bed
Or hit him, or scratched him, How much
he respected her
Even when she made no sense
Or said hurtful things, or didn't talk
At all,
How, next time, they'll live life backwards,
Get the bad times out of the way first
So they can end life young, brown, beautiful,
And both able to say,
"I love you."